

British Lepidoptera Collecting in 1978

By C. C. M. DE WORMS *

(Concluded from page 167)

During my brief stay in Suffolk, Mr. George Baker had most kindly let me run my static trap in his garden at Reydon as he had also done in 1975. The three nights provided some 350 individuals comprising 62 species of macros most of which I had already seen in Norfolk. Both *A. nigricans* and *A. tritici* were again present together with seven *H. albicolon* on the night of the 8th. Other species of note in his trap, mostly not previously mentioned, included *Lophopteryx capucina* L., *Eilema complana* L., *Cilix glaucata* Scop., *Nola cucullatella* L., *Lampra fimbria* L., *Hadena rivularis* L., *H. suasa* D. & S., *Mythimna conigera* L., *Procus literosa* Haworth, *Amathes baja* D. & S., *Apamea anceps* F., *A. remissa* D. & S., *Abraxas grossuaria* L. and *Hepialus sylvina* L.

Many butterflies were flying on the subsequent days in Surrey in brilliant sunshine, especially a spate of Peacocks with a good many Small Tortoiseshells and Large Whites. On August 11th in Alice Holt Forest *Limenitis camilla* L. and *Argynnis paphia* L. were still on the wing in reasonably good condition. On the 13th Mr. J. L. Messenger accompanied me to King's Park Wood. Among a dozen species of butterflies noted were *Gonepteryx rhamni* L., *L. sinapis* L., *L. camilla*, *Inachis io* L., *A. paphia*, *Polygonia c-album* L., *M. jurtina*, *M. tithonus* L., *Pieris brassicae* L., and *Thymelicus sylvestris* Poda. The next day I visited White Down in equally fine weather with the temperature at over 70°F in the shade, but only a few *Lysandra coridon* Poda were to be seen with a fair number of *M. jurtina*. Both these insects were also none too numerous on Ranmore Common on the 18th. Two days later on the 20th, I was again in Alice Holt with Dr. J. Holmes in an unfamiliar part of the forest by Lodge Pond, which was surrounded by beds of flea-bane which attracted several Commas, together with a single Red Admiral, and a few Peacocks and many *Pieris napi* and *M. tithonus*. It was still in the 70's during the third week in August, and these conditions were still pervading when I travelled to Dorset on the 26th for the late summer holiday, which I spent with my relative near Blandford. En route I called on Mr. C. Dixon at Northbrook Farm near Micheldever, where many *Pieris* patronised his large buddleia. Later, near Coombe Bisset west of Salisbury, the only insect seen on the downs was an *Eremobia ochroleuca* D. & S. on a flower head. On the 27th many Peacocks graced the buddleias of Mr. Anthony Deane at Milton Abbas, while the next day the 28th Mr. R. Hatton not far from Wimborne at Lower Row had nine species of butterflies on it, including singletons of *Pyra-meis cardui* L., *Satyrus semele* L. with a good many *Aglaia urticae* L., *I. io* and *G. rhamni*. That afternoon saw me at the

* Three Oaks, Shores Road, Woking, Surrey.

home of Mr. N. G. Wykes at Uploders near Bridport, where again many Whites, mainly *P. napi*, were in his garden. Peacocks seemed everywhere in the New Forest on the 29th both in the gardens of Admiral Torlesse and in that of Mr. Donald Russwurm.

August ended on quite a warm note. It was very congenial when Mr. J. Messenger and myself set out on September 1st for North Wales. Travelling by the two big motorways and Middlewich to Flint, we reached that afternoon the Nant Hall Hotel just east of Prestatyn, which was to be our very pleasant haven with an excellent cuisine during the next five days. En route we surveyed the shore line at Point of Air with its many sandhills, which was our venue the next evening, but a thorough search of the low-growing sea couch grass failed to disclose any insects. By day on the 2nd, we went over to Great Orme Head in bright sunshine, but little was flying except for a few Walls and only a single very worn female of the diminutive form of the Grayling f. *thione*, while we saw nothing on the wing on our return journey over the Sychant Pass, west of Conway. Another fine day greeted us on the 3rd, when we visited the famous garden at Bodnant, where many Whites were flying with a good many Speckled Woods. That evening we were again on the Point of Air sandhills under much better conditions. A Heath light run till nearly 11 p.m. attracted thirteen species which included *Philudoria potatoria*, *Euproctis similis* L., *Amathes xanthographa* L., many *Luperina testacea* D. & S., *Diarsia rubi* View., *Apamea secalis* L., *Euschesis comes* Hübn., also *Ortholitha chenopodiata* L. and *Epirrhoe alternata* Müll., but there was no sign at light or at rest of *Luperina nickerlii* Freyer our main quarry which another visitor saw in some numbers in this area ten days previously. Another brilliant day on September 4th tempted us to visit Anglesey which we reached about midday. In the early afternoon we went to the South Stack lighthouse at Holyhead where quite a number of Pierids were on the wing with a few *M. tithonus*. But a search under vegetation on a beach at Trearddur Bay failed to yield any larvae of *Agrotis ripae* Hübn. which had been numerous some fifteen years before in this region. Bad weather on the 5th following a day at Chester Zoo prevented our revisiting the shore locality, but we ran our static m.v. trap in the garden of our hotel for our last two nights. Among 240 insects recorded comprising 32 species, were several *Euxoa nigricans*, *E. tritici* and *L. testacea* as well as *Agrotis vestigialis* Hufn., *Agrotis puta* Hübn., *Mamestra brassicae* L., *Aporophyla nigra* Haworth, *Procus literosa* Haworth, *Cosmia trapezina* L., *C. affinis* L., *Gortyna micacea* Esp., *Plusia gamma* L., *Hypena proboscidalis* L., *Thera obeliscata* Hübn., *Hydriomena furcata* Thunb., *Deuteronomos alniaria* L. and many *Cleora rhomboidaria* D. & S. Early on September 6th, we set our course south again returning to Surrey by the same route as we had taken five days before, but we were somewhat empty-handed — after our long journey and efforts.

Very pleasant conditions prevailed for this late summer period with the daily temperature in the low 70's, but they deteriorated very much on the 11th when I literally set sail for Guernsey going by train to Weymouth and embarking on the 4½ hours crossing in almost a gale with heavy seas running. Luckily the boat was well stabilised. It was my first visit to the Channel Islands whose lepidopterous fauna is now included in that of the British Isles in the recent volume of "the Butterflies and Moths of Great Britain and Ireland". I was met at the quay by Dr. Tim Peet who took up residence in 1977 to practise as the chief surgeon on the island. He had arranged for me to stay at the Hotel Favorita which looks out on the sea just above St. Peters Port. Fortunately the rough conditions relented and my three days were spent in brilliant sunshine and warmth. I hired a car, and on the 12th and 13th, surveyed the very attractive wooded coast towards the west, visiting Bôt Bay and the larger Rocquane Bay. Many *P. aegeria* were flying in these rocky areas round the low vegetation studded with stunted oaks, and with *Pieris napi* accompanying the Speckled woods. These two butterflies seemed to be the main inhabitants at this period, and were also plentiful in Dr. Peet's garden, which lies just behind the airport some five miles from St. Peters. On the 14th I took the launch to the small island of Herm, where I spent most of the day visiting its beauty spots and seeing again many *P. napi* and *P. aegeria*. However, it was the yield of the static m.v. trap run in Dr. Peet's garden, and then at a friend's house overlooking St. Martin's Head on the last two nights, that yielded the best results. By far the most numerous visitor was *Agrotis trux* Hübn., both at le Chêne (my friend's garden) and also at St. Martin's Head, where *Eilema caniola* Hübn. was almost equally numerous, especially on the night of the 14th among about 150 individuals. Other species of note recorded on the four nights the traps were run, included *Eumichtis lichenea* Hübn., *Aporophyla nigra* Haworth, *Antetype flavicincta* D. & S., several *Leucochlaena hispida* Geyer and *Leucania putrescens* Hübn. in a large and bright form, as was also the local form of *Cryphia muralis* Forst. Of the few geometers present by far the most noteworthy was *Ortholitha peribolata* Hübn. of common occurrence there, but a very rare visitor to the British mainland. Also seen were a fair number of *Scopula promutata* Guen. On September 15th, I once more set out on a much kinder sea for Weymouth and Surrey, after a brief but most interesting sojourn in this most delightful part of the British Isles.

The rest of September was mostly fine and warm with daily temperatures in the upper 60's, and occasionally topping 70°F, with 77°F on the 23rd. It was under such congenial weather, that I motored to Rogate near Petersfield on the 17th, to visit Mr. and Mrs. Jack Greenwood. Their fine garden was full of flowers which attracted a spate of Small Tortoiseshells and Small Whites. Another such summerlike day welcomed Dr. Holmes and myself on the 24th, when we were once more in

the Woolmer Forest area where *Aglais urticae* L. was everywhere, as it had been in numbers the previous week round Woking. In a small nearly dried-up pond we saw a colony of the large water beetle *Dytiscus marginalis*. My companion's m.v. trap at Linford was alive with autumn moths with at least 40 *A. nigra* and many *Aporophyla lutulenta* D. & S., *Agrochola lychnidis* D. & S., *Anchoscelis litura* L., *Omphaloscelis lunosa* Haworth with several *A. flavicincta*, *Amathes glareosa* and *Arenostola pygmina* Haworth.

October which opened very mild and with fine days, proved to be one of the warmest autumn periods this century and at the same time one of the driest. It was under these favourable conditions that I travelled by train to Thorpe-le-Soken in Essex on the 2nd, on a visit to Mr. Ben Fisher after a five years' interval at this time of the season. After dark we set up a portable m.v. lamp on some ground full of reeds and *Peucedanum officinale*, but for the 1½ hours we ran it from 9 till 10.30 p.m. we had few arrivals with only one *Rhizedra lutosus* Hübn., and a single *A. lutulenta* together with a few *G. micacea* and *A. lychnidis*. However, my host was able to plug in a static trap not far from our first site starting about 11 p.m. By the morning it had attracted quite a number of moths, including three fresh males of *Gortyna borelii* Mab., as well as a few *Agrochola lychnidis* D. & S. and a single *Catocala nupta* L., also *Phlogophora meticulosa* L. and *Noctua pronuba* L. As mentioned, October proved to be one of the best autumn months with the thermometer well in the 70's when I visited Alice Holt Forest and the Chiddingfold Woods on the 9th, but surprisingly nothing of note seemed to be on the wing in either locality, though Small Tortoiseshells were still plentiful on michaelmas daisies. These grand conditions continued with 77°F on the 11th and they only seemed to relax slightly during the second half of the month, which was equally dry and sunny, with a temperature above 60°F almost daily. November too opened with some of the mildest autumn days ever recorded for the time of year. On the 2nd, a number of *Oporinias* came to my m.v. light on the edge of Chobham Common, with about equal numbers of *O. dilutata* D. & S. and *O. autumnata* Borkh., as well as a good many *Chesias legatella* D. & S. and a few *Thera obeliscata* Hübn. and *Allophyes oxyacanthae* L. It was still in the 60's during the second week of this month and only slightly cooler when I travelled to Kent on the 11th, but nothing seemed to be on the move in those parts nor in Mr. Tweedie's garden near Rye on the 12th, a very bright and congenial day. I returned to Surrey on the 13th. The amazingly mild spell continued till the 26th, when a very cold and wintry snap set in, but only lasting just a week with warmer days ushering in the first half of December. After a cold snap in the middle of the month, there were some very mild days over the Christmas period with plenty of *Operophtera brumata* L. at my sister's doorlight on December 26th at Virginia Water. But heavy snow fell on the 30th and the year ended on a very bleak and wintry note.

The first half of 1978 was very lean and late for the lepidoptera, but insects were much more numerous from late July and the autumn migration with its spate of *Leucania unipuncta* brought quite a notable end to an otherwise not very outstanding year.

LEPIDOPTEROLOGY IN BELGIUM.—Since the early 1830s, when Edmond de Sélys-Longchamps published the first lists of Lepidoptera, Lepidopterology has changed considerably in Belgium. In 1857 the first Belgian entomological journal was created, but apart from two important catalogues of Lepidoptera (in 1857 and 1882), few papers dealing with butterflies and moths have appeared in the *Bulletin de la Société entomologique de Belgique*.

Lambillion with the help of a few colleagues, founded an entomological society in 1897, which published from 1901 onwards a monthly review called *Revue mensuelle de la Société entomologique namuroise*. In 1926, this journal was renamed *Lambillionea*, after which F. Derenne worked it up and made it "world read". In 1944, L. Berger took over the direction of *Lambillionea*, and for sometime this journal has consisted mainly of papers dealing with the African fauna, though Sarlet and Hackray try hard to finish their catalogue of Belgian Lepidoptera which is issued as a supplement. Consequently J. Van Schepdael felt there was a need for a new journal dealing mainly with European Lepidoptera, so in 1958 he founded *Linneana Belgica*.

Since 1963, the "Antwerpse Vereniging voor Entomologie" has published some rather scattered papers on Lepidoptera in *Schakel*, a journal of several local Antwerp societies dealing with natural history and helped financially by the local zoo. These facilities came to an end, and since 1973 the entomological society of Antwerp has had to "fly with its own wings". So they started publication of a nice off-set bulletin named *Phegea* in honour of the local rarity *Amata phegea* L.

In 1968 the "Cercle des Lépidoptéristes de Belgique" was born. With a membership of 200, mostly amateurs, we estimate that this society consists of about half the total number of lepidopterists resident in Belgium. Its off-set bulletin publishes short papers both in french and dutch, as well as accounts of their monthly meetings at the "Institut Royal de Sciences Naturelles" in Brussels.

Since 1974 we have edited *Linneana Belgica*. Considerable efforts are made to increase the number of subscribers. We publish mainly in French on Lepidoptera from all over Europe, mostly with summaries in English, Dutch and German. Great care is taken over the illustrations of papers, which are received from every country in Europe. There are four issues per annum and a total of 192 pages. The annual subscription is B.F.300 — (about £5). — R. LEESTMANS, 4 Parvis St. Gilles, B-1060, Brussels, Belgium.